

MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF PARK COMMISSIONERS
FOR THE CITY OF WICHITA, KANSAS

held in the Park and Recreation Department Conference Room
March 12, 2001 - 3:30 p.m.

Present: M.S. "Mitch" Mitchell, President; June Bailey, First Vice President; Leon Robinson, Second Vice President; James Johnston; William Sanders; Joe Todd; Douglas R. Kupper, CPRP, Director of Park and Recreation; and Jan Morgan, Recording Secretary.

Also present:

From Wilson Darnell Mann -
Lee Engler; John Brewer; Steve Murillo
From Baughman Company -
Jeff Best

President Mitchell called the meeting to order at 3:30 p.m.

Approve the minutes of the 2/5/01 Regular Meeting. Approval of the minutes of the regular meeting on February 5, 2001, was deferred.

Discussion of Riverside Park System Master Plan. Kupper stated that consultants with Wilson Darnell Mann have been working from the Riverside Park Master Plan created six to seven years ago to expand on what the Master Plan intended. Further information and direction from the Park Board and residents of the Riverside neighborhood is now being sought. The next step will be to design drawings to implement the concepts that are to be discussed today. Kupper then introduced Lee Engler of Wilson Darnell Mann.

Engler presented a drawing showing the three main parts of Riverside Park: Oak Park in North Riverside, Park Villa, and Central Riverside. Engler explained there would be several changes in location of entrances to the park, and that new parking areas, landscaping and artwork would be added to enhance the natural beauty of the park.

Oak Park will have pieces of art in key areas, and the disc golf course will be relocated to the outer edge of the park. Engler then introduced Steve Murillo, who expanded on the type of art which will be displayed.

Murillo stated the artwork will consist mainly of natural objects, such as wood, clay, stone, water, etc. so as to compliment their surroundings. Some of the art pieces may be on display for just a season, rather than be a permanent structure. He explained that the stone wall added will continue throughout Riverside Park. An unidentified citizen from the audience expressed concern

about tearing up the park to put in this wall. Murillo assured those present that the low stone wall would blend in with its surrounding landscape and would not interrupt the flow of the parkway. Another unidentified citizen asked if the stone curb would remain in the park. Engler answered that it would. Kupper added that these positive features in the park would attract more positive forms of recreation.

Engler stated he and the other consultants were open to other ideas as to locations for shelters and drives. He pointed out two small areas close to the river where the public could sit and reflect. These areas would be in place of shelters in North Riverside Park.

Engler then moved on to describe the changes at Park Villa, which he foresees as a formal garden to be used for family gatherings, weddings, etc. The new plan would eliminate the road running through Park Villa and add xeriscaping so as to make the shelter building the center of the Park.

For Central Riverside Park, Engler stated the current overall plan is to make it a family park. Their first concern was how the park was separated by roadways. They decided to go with the concept of eliminating the road from Murdock to Nims, but provide a second access road along River Boulevard, keeping Stackman open so it would outskirt the property and bring access from the neighborhood into the park. The plan would encourage pedestrian traffic rather than motor vehicle traffic.

Locating the heart of the park was the most difficult part of the design process, said Engler. He stressed the need to keep in mind the necessity of blending with the environment and consideration of historical elements. Trix Niernberger expressed the hope that Native American history would also be considered in the design process.

An unidentified citizen in the audience asked about patrolling the area. John Brewer, Architect, answered that lighting took into consideration the concerns of the police in providing protection to those who used the park. Mitchell said he specifically wanted it to be on record that the Patrol West section of the Wichita Police Department objected to the "meditation shelters" that were to be built in Oak Park because they were so far from the road the patrolmen would have to be on foot to investigate any possible disturbances or illegal activities.

When told about a possible access road being built behind homes on Forrest Street, several members of the audience objected. They collectively expressed their wishes to see traffic in front of and not behind their homes. Kupper assured them this concern would be addressed and that there would be no such road included in the final design. Those who voiced their support for the overall plan included Annie Best, 1210 W. 11th, and Kathy Dittmer, 823 Litchfield.

Lucy Burtnett, 811 Wiley, pointed out that the sled hill and ice pond were not part of the original plan, but otherwise expressed her support, also.

James Johnston suggested that the pond in Oak Park be used for ice skating, rather than creating a new pond in Central Riverside Park. He didn't want to see a drastic change in the landscaping of Central Riverside Park. Engler assured him there would not be. In connection with the ice pond, Dorothy Beckel (address unknown) asked if any trees would be removed to make the pond, as she had seen some tree removal in the area already. Kupper clarified that the only reason trees were being removed is due to disease.

Annie Best asked about the traffic from the concert area walking across Nims. Engler answered that a small parking area was to be created for those attending concerts in Central Riverside Park. Kupper added that for special events, Nims could be closed for a day to allow pedestrian traffic to flow freely.

Best then reminded the Board that when the original Riverside Park Master Plan was introduced to the neighborhood, area residents had worked with staff and consultants for three years to come to an agreement on what would be done. She hoped that this group wasn't having to start from square one, but could use the points agreed upon at that time to help the design process. Kupper said he had a copy of the original priority list agreed upon at that time and it would be incorporated into the new design plan.

Bailey asked if all three parts of the park would have new water features. Engler answered that Oak Park and Park Villa's existing water features would merely be enhanced with new landscaping and low retaining walls. The only new water features would be found in Central Riverside Park. Bailey then asked what type of material would be used for the walls. Kupper replied they would be mostly made of limestone or other indigenous rock similar to the arch in Oak Park.

Finally, Bailey asked what the parking capacity in Central Riverside Park would be with this new plan. Engler answered there would be approximately 40 spaces on one side of Nims and approximately 60 on the other. Kupper added that when it isn't being used for parking, the ground would be considered "green space."

Best said she hoped that the new water features in the park would include monies for maintenance. She pointed out that the water features at Watson Park were beautiful, but had not been used in years because the maintenance costs were too high.

Richard Swope, a resident of Forrest Street, said he was concerned about the width of the bike paths. He also asked if there could be designated areas for pedestrians vs. bikes. Kupper said bike paths are generally 10 feet wide. Swope

said he had experienced some close calls with bikers who had come up behind him while he was using the path.

Mitchell said the shelter west of the Girl Scout Little House is not one of the priorities because if this shelter is built, 11th Street may need to be closed. Engler said this was not part of the scope of the project. Kupper added that picnic shelters have to be shown as a possible addition whether they are part of the final design plan or not because other structures would have to be designed around them. Engler suggested new shelters off of 11th Street with parking closer to the road. Mitchell said if the road stays open from 11th Street to Forrest, small picnic shelters should be placed there. Kupper stated that section of the plan will have to be redesigned, based on whether or not the street will be closed.

Swope asked if the sidewalk between Forrest and 11th would be eliminated. Engler said it would remain.

The consultants concluded their presentation by thanking the area residents for their input.

At 4:55 p.m., President Mitchell proposed a five-minute break.

The meeting readjourned at 5 p.m.

Discussion of Adult Soccer Property in North Central Wichita. Kupper stated that we used to have adults playing soccer at Schell Park, but because of the large crowds, this was no longer done. Property at 37th and Ohio on City-owned industrial land is currently being used for adult soccer on two fields. This location was not to be a permanent solution. The preference of the adult soccer league was to find property in their neighborhood. Three parcels of land totalling approximately 16-18 acres were considered. However, due to a very high cost (\$1.10 per square foot), other locations were considered.

Kupper stated staff is now ready to present a proposal to the City Council to purchase 5.68 acres on the west side of Ohio, between 37th and 29th Streets North. This land is large enough for two adult size soccer fields. An adult soccer field, according to Kupper, takes about two acres for construction. Kupper did not know how much groundwork would be necessary to make the land playable, due to heavy overgrowth obscuring the contours of the land. The price for this acreage was just under \$.90 per square foot, and Kupper estimated with closing costs the total would amount to \$201,000.

Johnston asked if this land was acceptable to the adult soccer league. Kupper answered that the proposal has not yet been presented to them, but that was the next step in the process. We foresee no conflicts in the future, even if

the rest of the area is developed. Everything surrounding the property is fairly vacant at this time.

JOHNSTON moved, BAILEY seconded, that Doug Kupper, CPRP, Director of Park and Recreation, be authorized to proceed with the purchase of a 5.68-acre tract of land to be developed into two soccer fields and used for adult soccer play, if the user group agrees.

Bailey asked if restrooms would be built at the site. Kupper replied that a grant has been applied for. At this time, there are no plans to build restrooms. MOTION PASSED, 6-0.

DIRECTOR'S UPDATE:

Summer of Discovery - Kupper reviewed Summer of Discovery costs for the year 2000. Mitchell asked if the budget was exceeded and Kupper answered no. Kupper said the Park and Recreation Department has a grant from CSBG for program scholarships for participants. Bailey asked about the participation rate in the program. Kupper replied that all centers were at nearly 100% capacity (98 participants per facility per day). He added that next year, some programs for teens may be added at the Colvin and Lynette Woodard Center locations.

National Guard in Grove Park - Kupper is working with the consultants to get this plan accomplished in the fall of 2001. The National Guard is considering doing the work then. Kupper is working with Brock Sissel on this issue.

Repairs to Fairmount Park Shelter House - The Park and Recreation Department is working closely with the Department of Public Works to provide financing and cost assessments.

Arkansas River Improvement Plan - Kupper has a future meeting scheduled with Law Kingdon on this project. Mitchell expressed a strong desire for the Park Board to meet with their staff before plans become too far advanced.

Park Board Tour of Facilities - It was agreed that this tour would again be conducted to review the various Park and Recreation Department facilities. After checking schedules, a date of April 14 was agreed upon.

Availability of Vacant Land Adjacent to Schools for Park Development - Kupper presented two different maps showing various school sites, including Wildwood, Greiffenstein and Funston Schools. The site at Funston is approximately 7.2 acres. A memorandum prepared by staff of the Metropolitan Area Planning Department addresses in more detail this matter and is attached to these minutes.

Dedications - Kupper mentioned that on Saturday, April 7, 2001, Lincoln Park will be rededicated. He suggested that Park Board members may want to attend this dedication. Also included in this dedication ceremony is the Firefighters Museum.

Other upcoming dedications Kupper mentioned were for Naftzger Park and the Sherwood Glenn neighborhood playground.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:45 p.m.